



ARUNA ASAF ALI

'HEROINE OF 1942'





The route to your roots

Founder Editor: Anant Pai

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ARUNA ASAF ALI

LIPENDRANATH GANGULEE BELONGED TO BARISAL DISTRICT IN BENGAL BUT WORK TOOK HIM TO KALKA*, WHERE HE MANAGED A RESTAURANT.



ON 16 JULY 1909, A DAUGHTER WAS BORN TO LIPENDRANATH AND HIS WIFE, AMBALIKA DEVI.



WE WILL NAME HER ARUNA.

THE GANGULEES HAD ONE MORE DAUGHTER AND THREE SONS AFTER ARUNA.

SOME YEARS LATER, THE FAMILY MOVED TO LAHORE, WHERE ARUNA AND HER SISTER PURNIMA WERE ENROLLED IN THE SACRED HEART CONVENT.



I LIKE OUR NEW SCHOOL. WHAT ARE YOU CHOOSING AS YOUR SECOND LANGUAGE?

I HAVE CHOSEN URDU. IT'S A CHALLENGE BECAUSE IT IS NEW TO ME.

ARUNA LOVED CHALLENGES. PERHAPS THAT WAS WHY SHE WAS ATTRACTED TO THE HARD LIFE OF THE NUNS AT SCHOOL. ONE DAY -



MA, BABA, I HAVE DECIDED TO BECOME A NUN.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

SHE IS OUT OF HER MIND!

ALTHOUGH THE GANGULEES WERE FAIRLY LIBERAL, ARUNA'S ANNOUNCEMENT SHOCKED THEM.

SOON AFTER THIS INCIDENT -

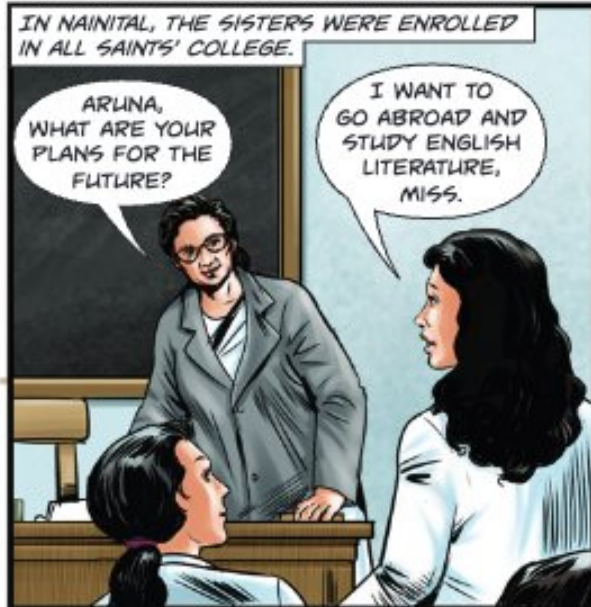


WE ARE MOVING TO NAINITAL. I HAVE A NEW HOTEL THERE - HOTEL HINDUSTAN.

WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL?

THERE ARE VERY GOOD SCHOOLS IN NAINITAL.

*NOW IN HARYANA



ARUNA AND ASAF ALI'S SHARED INTEREST IN ENGLISH LITERATURE GAVE THEM A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.

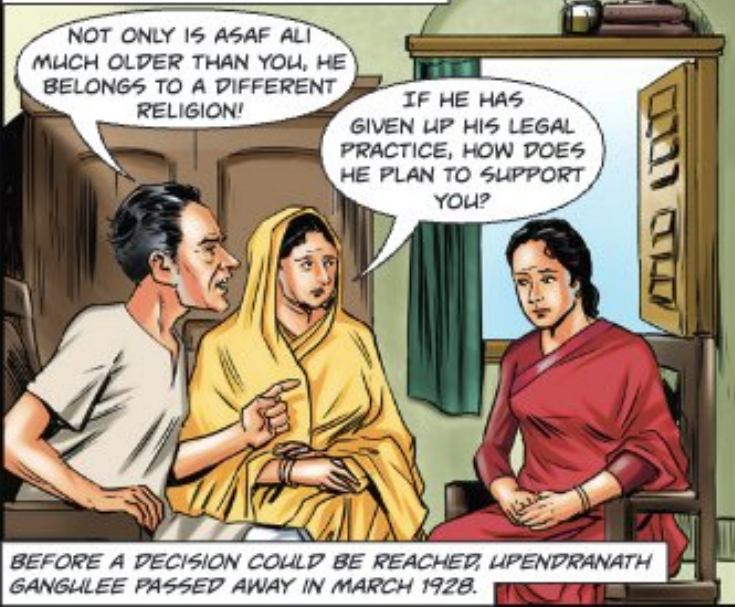


*INDIAN CIVIL SERVICES.

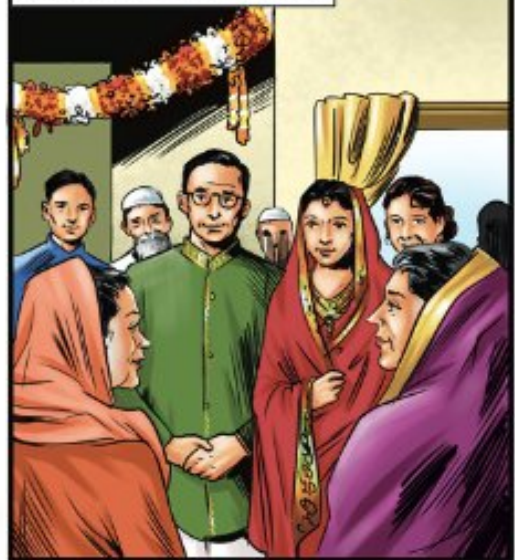
*HE HAD DEFENDED BALAKESHWAR DUTT AND BHAGAT SINGH IN THE LAHORE CONSPIRACY CASE.

**NOW KOLKATA

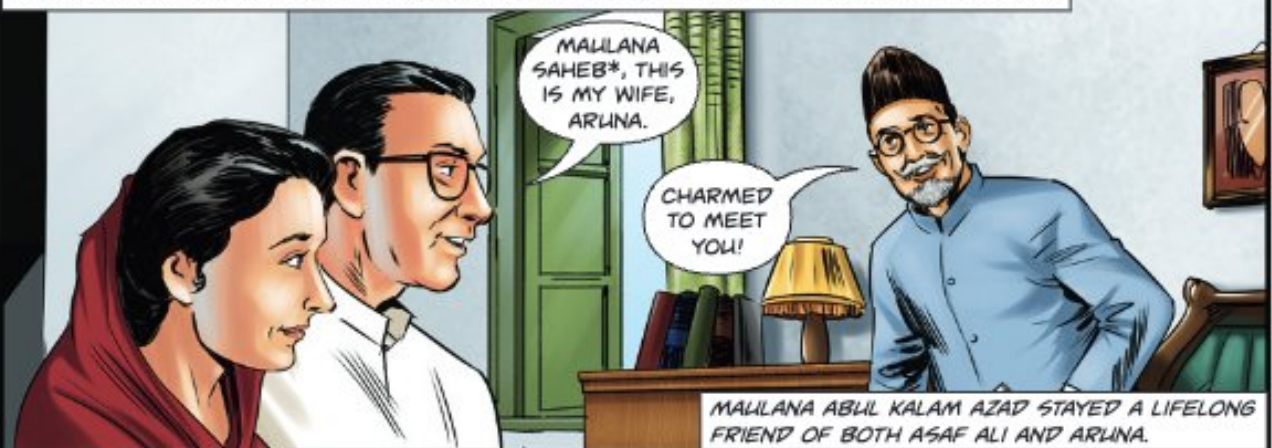
WHEN ARUNA BROKE THE NEWS TO HER PARENTS, THERE WAS AN UPROAR IN THE GANGULEE HOUSE.



IN SEPTEMBER 1928, ARUNA MARRIED ASAF ALI. BOTH THE FAMILIES WERE INITIALLY RESISTANT BUT SLOWLY ACCEPTED THE MARRIAGE.



THE COUPLE MOVED TO DELHI WHERE ARUNA MET STALWARTS OF THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE.



ARUNA COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HER HUSBAND'S PASSIONATE INTEREST IN INDIAN POLITICS.



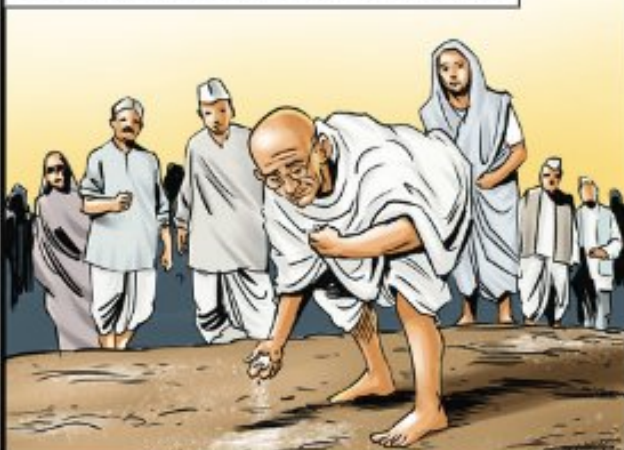
HOWEVER, THE DISCUSSIONS MADE ARUNA QUESTION BRITISH RULE.



*A WELL-KNOWN FREEDOM FIGHTER
*THE BRITISH FLAG

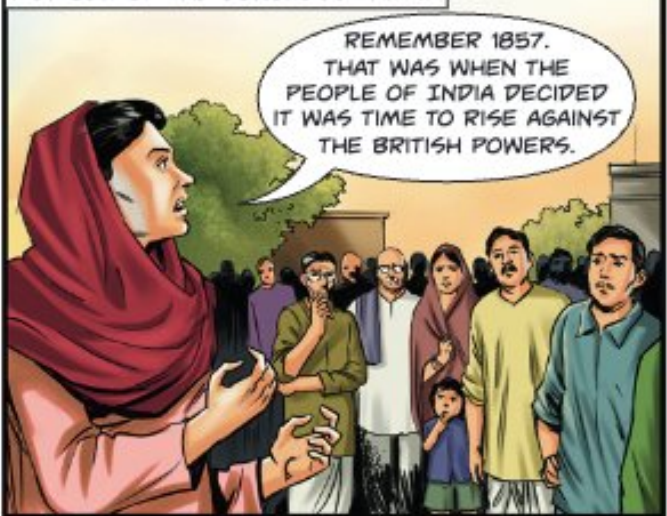
**THE BRITISH NATIONAL ANTHEM

IN MARCH 1930, MAHATMA GANDHI BROKE THE SALT LAW BY MAKING SALT AT DANDI.



CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE BROKE OUT AND HUNDREDS WERE ARRESTED, INCLUDING ASAF ALI.

ARUNA JOINED THE SALT SATYAGRAHA AND BECAME A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS PARTY.



REMEMBER 1857. THAT WAS WHEN THE PEOPLE OF INDIA DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO RISE AGAINST THE BRITISH POWERS.

HER FIERY PUBLIC SPEECH LED TO HER FIRST ARREST.



MRS ASAF ALI, CAN YOU PROVIDE A GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL NOT BREAK ANY LAWS IN THE FUTURE?

I REFUSE TO GIVE ANY GUARANTEE FOR MY BEHAVIOUR, NOW OR IN THE FUTURE!

ACCUSED OF BEING A VAGRANT*, ARUNA WAS SENT TO LAHORE JAIL WHERE ASAF ALI TOO WAS BEING HELD. HERE, HE SENT HER SIX STORIES^a IN THE LETTERS HE WROTE HER.

WHEN THE OTHER PRISONERS WERE RELEASED UNDER THE TERMS OF THE GANDHI-IRWIN PACT** -



WHY HAVEN'T YOU LET MRS ASAF ALI OUT?

A VAGRANT DOES NOT QUALIFY FOR RELEASE.

THE OTHER PRISONERS PROTESTED AGAINST THIS UNFAIR TREATMENT AND DEMANDED HER RELEASE. FINALLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO GIVE IN AND ARUNA EMERGED FROM PRISON TO A HERO'S WELCOME.



ARUNAJI, ZINDABAD! BHARAT MATA KI JAI^m!

*SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE A FIXED HOME
^aTHESE WERE STORIES BASED ON FANTASY AND MYTHOLOGY

**AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN MAHATMA GANDHI AND LORD IRWIN THAT ALLOWED THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS
^mVICTORY TO MOTHER INDIA

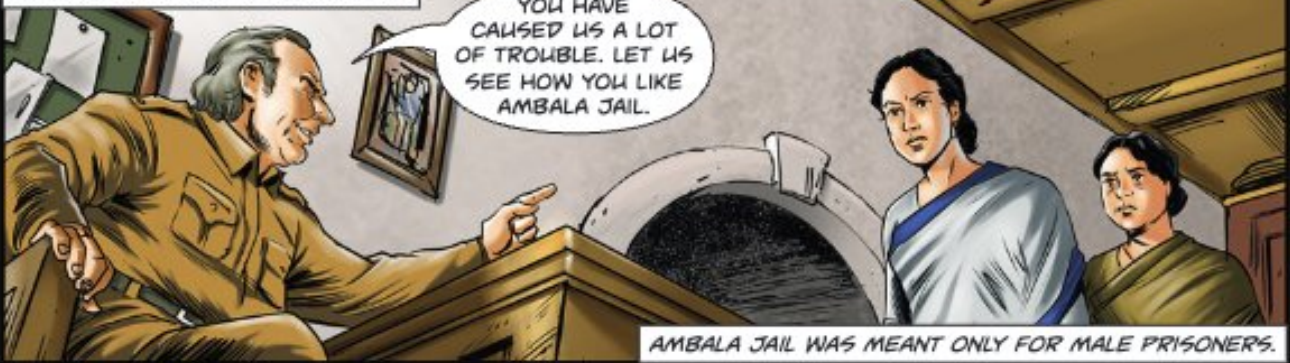
IN THE 1932 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT, ARLINA WAS ARRESTED AGAIN.



ARLINA WAS APPALLED AT THE CONDITION OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN DELHI'S TIHAR JAIL. SO -



ARLINA'S PUNISHMENT WAS HARSH.

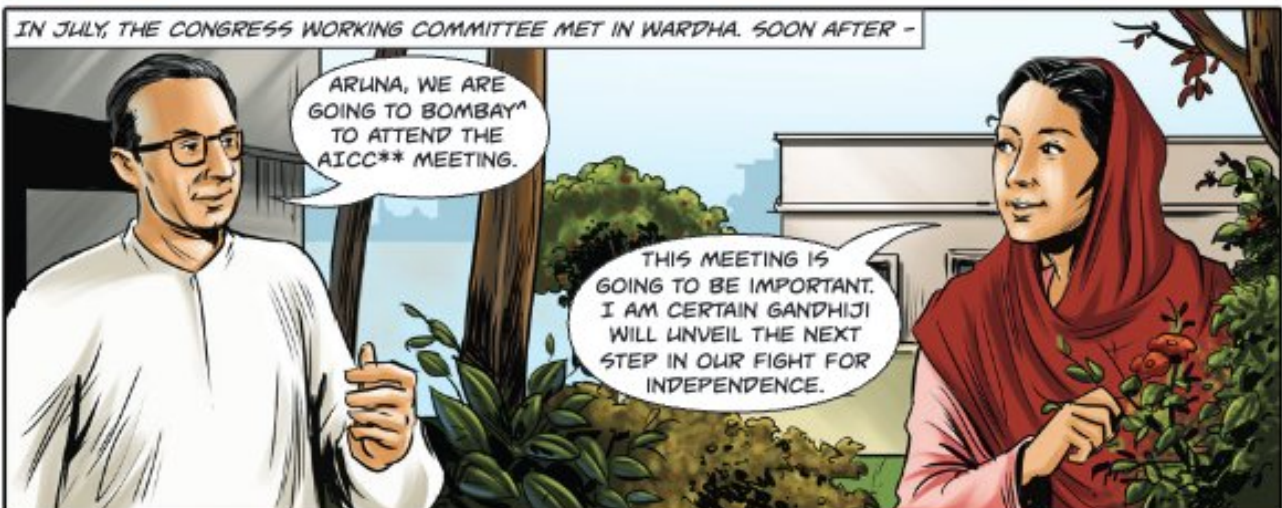
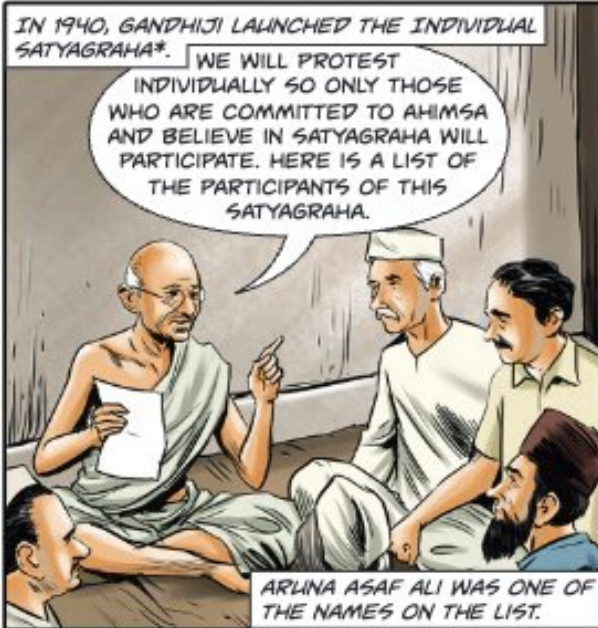


AT AMBALA JAIL ARLINA WAS KEPT IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT AS A PUNISHMENT FOR PROTESTING.



ONCE SHE WAS OUT OF JAIL, ARLINA FOLLOWED THE COUNTRY'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE, FOR TEN YEARS, WITHOUT PARTICIPATING IN IT.

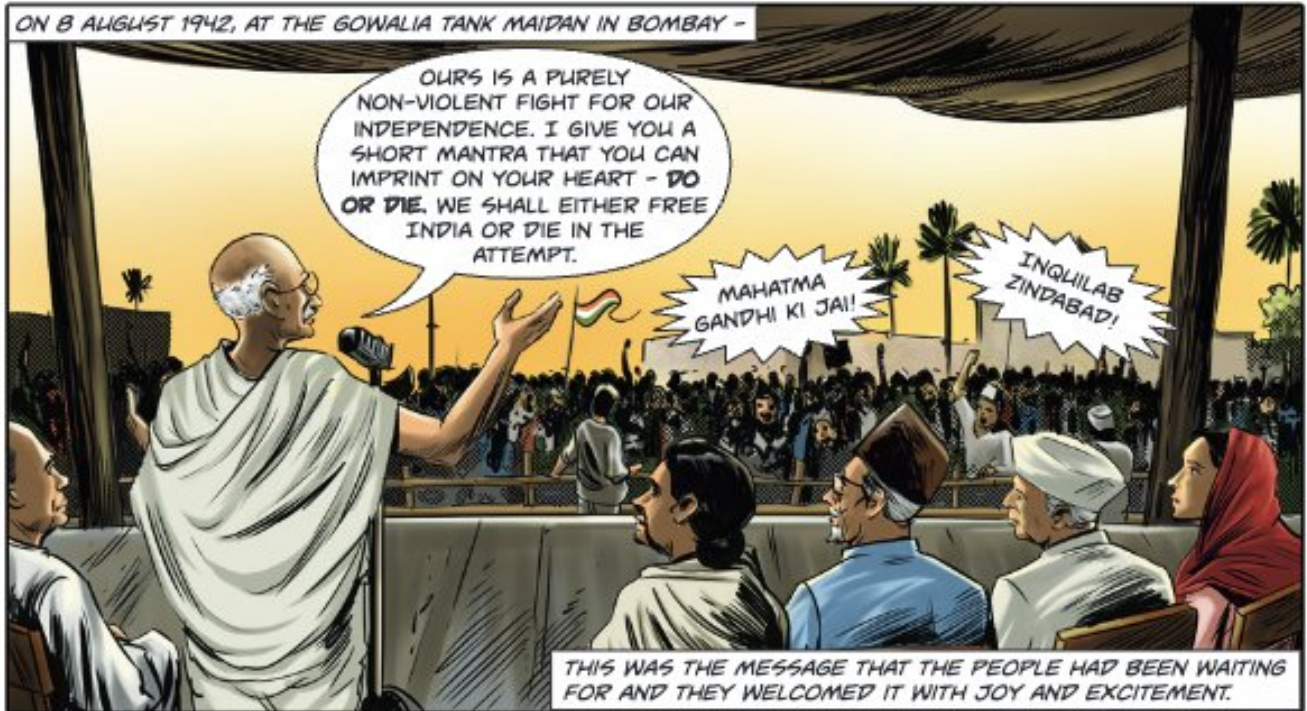




*ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE WAS THE FIRST TO BE SELECTED. WHEN HE WAS ARRESTED JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TOOK HIS PLACE, AND SO IT CONTINUED.
*NOW MUMBAI

*SIR CRIPPS WANTED INDIAN LEADERS TO SUPPORT BRITAIN IN WORLD WAR II. IN EXCHANGE INDIA WOULD BE ALLOWED SELF-GOVERNANCE.
**ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

ON 8 AUGUST 1942, AT THE GOWALIA TANK MAIDAN IN BOMBAY -



EARLY NEXT MORNING -



AT BORI BLUNDER RAILWAY STATION A SPECIAL TRAIN STOOD READY TO CARRY THE LEADERS AWAY TO A SECRET DESTINATION.



THE LEADERS WERE TAKEN AWAY BEFORE THEY COULD CHALK OUT A PLAN OF ACTION.

WHEN ARUNA REACHED GOWALIA TANK MAIDAN -



AT THAT MOMENT ARUNA KNEW WHAT SHE HAD TO DO.

WITH CALM CERTAINTY SHE STEPPED FORWARD AND HOISTED THE FLAG SWIFTLY.



A ROAR WENT UP -



WHEN ARUNA WITNESSED THE BRUTALITY OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SHE VOWED THAT SHE WOULD HELP TEAR UP BRITISH RULE.



SOON, IT WAS TIME FOR ARUNA TO GO BACK TO DELHI.



SEVERAL OTHER LEADERS HAD ALREADY GONE UNDERGROUND FROM WHERE THEY CONTINUED THEIR WORK.



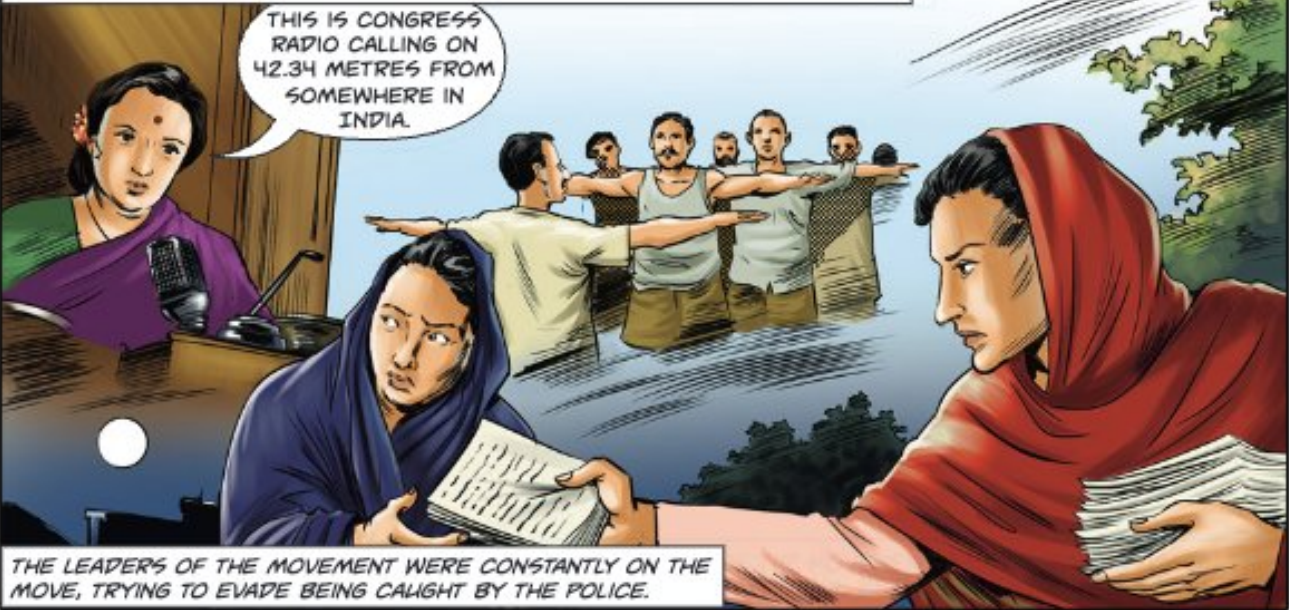
THOUGH ARUNA SPENT THE NEXT FEW YEARS IN HIDING, SHE TRAVELLED EXTENSIVELY.



*TO GO INTO HIDING

*ACHYUT PATWARDHAN WAS A FREEDOM FIGHTER WHO HAD ALSO GONE INTO HIDING.

ARUNA AND THE OTHER LEADERS ORGANISED THE PEOPLE OF INDIA SO THEY COULD OFFER A DISCIPLINED RESISTANCE TO THE BRITISH POWERS.

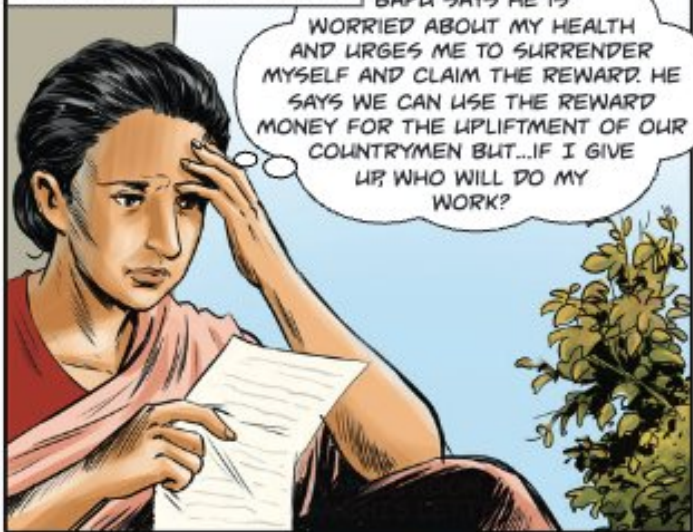


THE LEADERS OF THE MOVEMENT WERE CONSTANTLY ON THE MOVE, TRYING TO EVADE BEING CAUGHT BY THE POLICE.

ARUNA DID NOT KEEP VERY GOOD HEALTH AND THAT WORRIED HER FRIENDS.



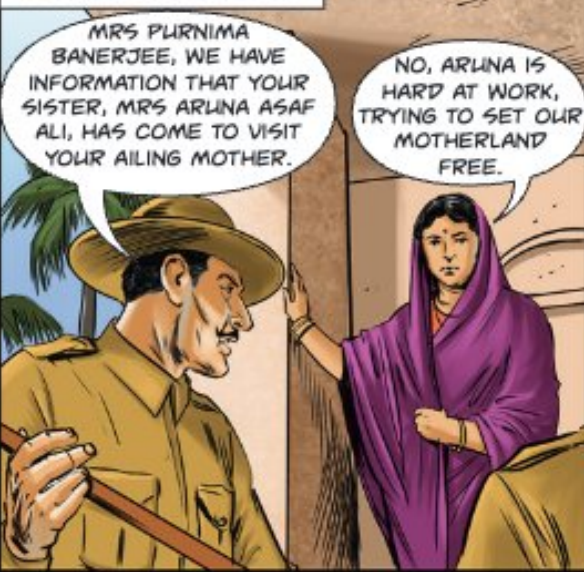
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT OFFERED A REWARD OF RS 5000 FOR HER CAPTURE.



THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DID EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO FIND ARUNA.



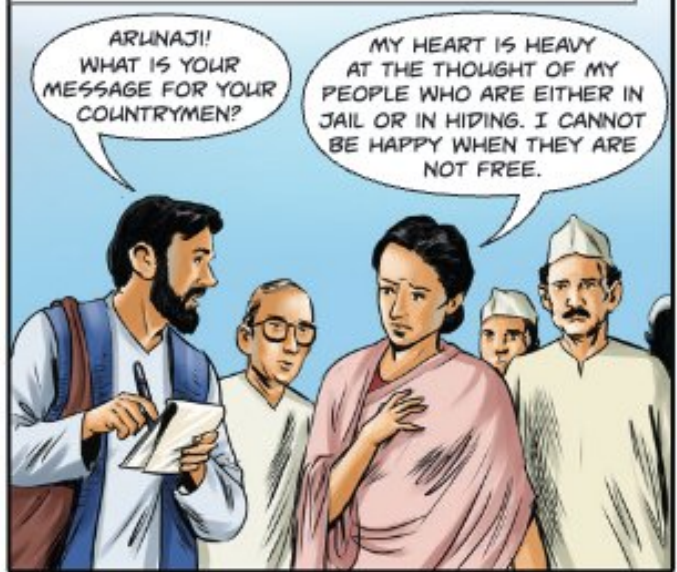
THE POLICE CHASED EVERY LEAD, EVEN TRAVELLING TO ALLAHABAD.



MRS PURNIMA BANERJEE, WE HAVE INFORMATION THAT YOUR SISTER, MRS ARUNA ASAF ALI, HAS COME TO VISIT YOUR AILING MOTHER.

NO, ARUNA IS HARD AT WORK, TRYING TO SET OUR MOTHERLAND FREE.

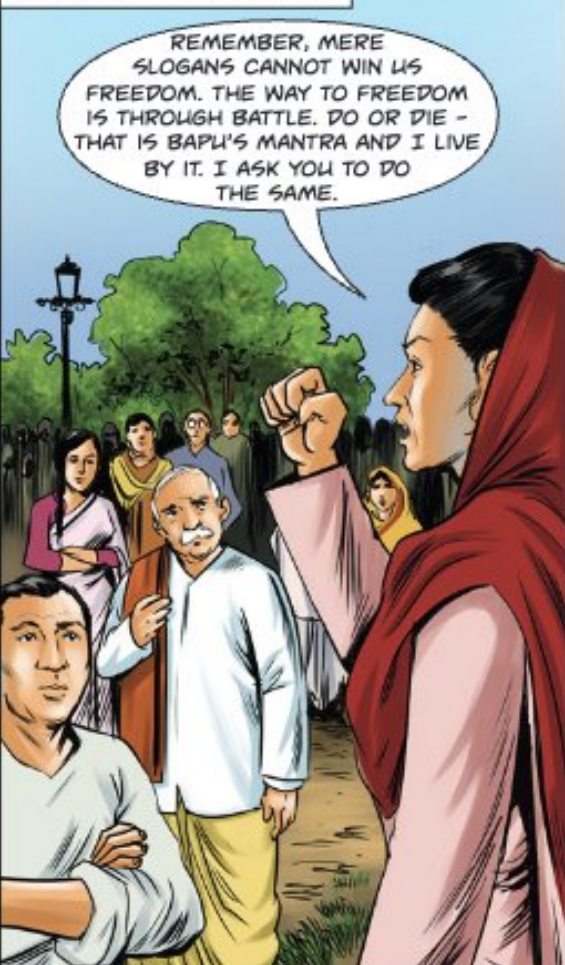
THE WARRANT AGAINST ARUNA WAS CANCELLED ON 26 JANUARY 1946. A FEW DAYS LATER IN CALCUTTA -



ARUNAJI! WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE FOR YOUR COUNTRYMEN?

MY HEART IS HEAVY AT THE THOUGHT OF MY PEOPLE WHO ARE EITHER IN JAIL OR IN HIDING. I CANNOT BE HAPPY WHEN THEY ARE NOT FREE.

ASAF ALI HAD BEEN IN JAIL ALL THIS TIME. EVEN AFTER HIS RELEASE THEY COULD NOT SPEND TIME TOGETHER AS ARUNA WAS CONSTANTLY TRAVELLING. IN ALLAHABAD -



REMEMBER, MERE SLOGANS CANNOT WIN US FREEDOM. THE WAY TO FREEDOM IS THROUGH BATTLE. DO OR DIE - THAT IS BAPU'S MANTRA AND I LIVE BY IT. I ASK YOU TO DO THE SAME.

HER TIME IN HIDING HAD HELPED ARUNA RECOGNISE THE PATH SHE WISHED TO TAKE TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE FOR INDIA.

SHE RECOGNISED THE NEED FOR WOMEN TO JOIN THE STRUGGLE AND SO, IN DELHI -



I URGE YOU TO BOYCOTT FOREIGN GOODS AND TO POPULARISE SWADESHI.

ARUNA WAS DESCRIBED AS 'THE HEROINE OF THE 1942 REVOLUTION!'

WHEN THE SAILORS OF THE ROYAL INDIAN NAVY WENT ON STRIKE...

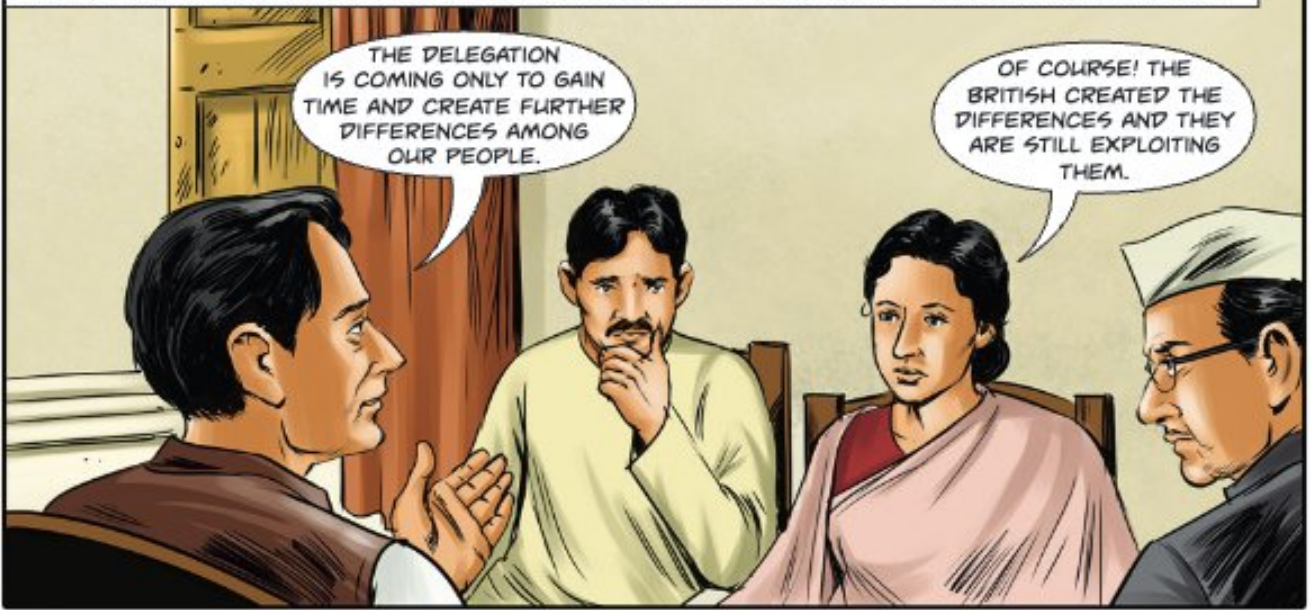


WE WANT EQUAL PAY!

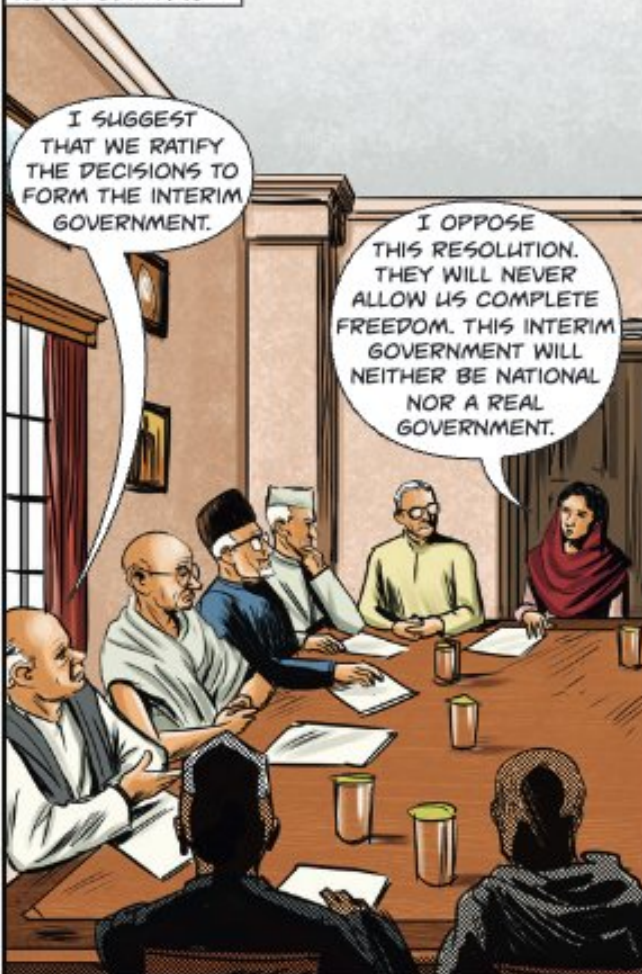
WE DEMAND BETTER FOOD!

...ARUNA WAS THE ONLY LEADER WHO SUPPORTED THEM.

WHEN THE CABINET DELEGATION FROM BRITAIN PROPOSED THE FORMATION OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT -

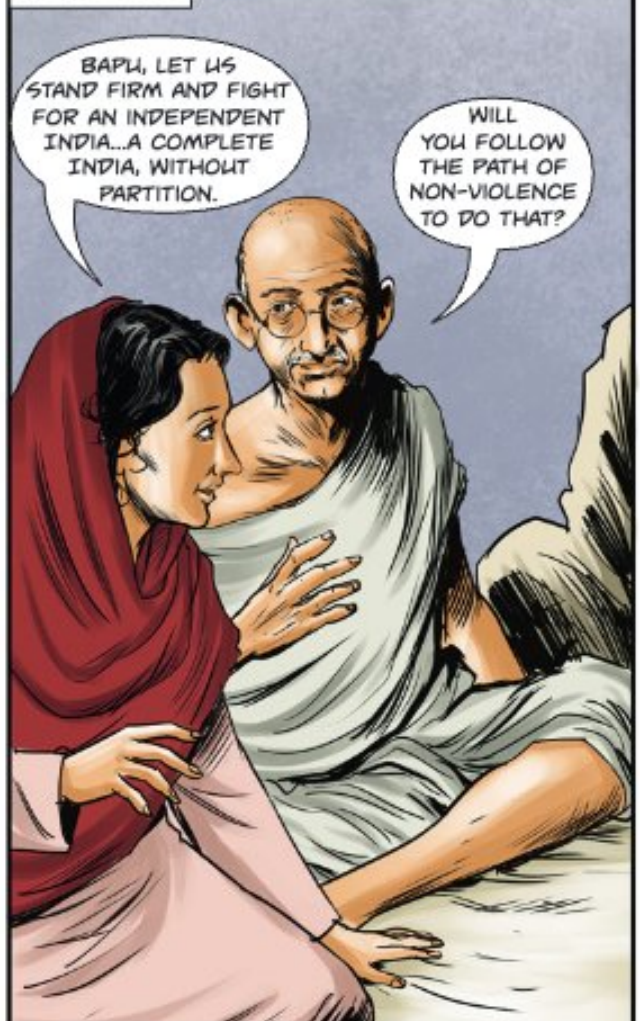


ARUNA WAS AGAINST ACCEPTING THE PROPOSAL OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO FORM AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT. AT THE AICC SESSION IN NOVEMBER 1946 -



TO ARUNA THE 'TRANSFER OF POWER' SEEMED LIKE A GIFT FROM THE BRITISH, AND NOT THE FREEDOM THAT THE INDIANS HAD FOUGHT FOR SO LONG.

AT THE BEGINNING OF 1947, INDEPENDENCE FINALLY SEEMED CLOSE BUT IT WAS GOING TO COME AT A TRAGIC PRICE.



ARUNA KNEW THEN THAT INDIA WOULD HAVE TO LOSE A PART OF ITSELF TO GAIN INDEPENDENCE.

AS INDIANS PREPARED TO TAKE THE REINS OF THEIR COUNTRY INTO THEIR OWN HANDS, IMPORTANT APPOINTMENTS WERE MADE. IN THE ASAF ALI HOUSEHOLD -



I HAVE BEEN APPOINTED THE FIRST AMBASSADOR OF INDEPENDENT INDIA TO THE USA.

THAT IS A GREAT HONOUR INDEED, ASAF SAHEB, BUT I CANNOT LEAVE MY COUNTRY WHEN IT MOST NEEDS ME.

MAHATMA GANDHI TRIED TO PERSUADE ARUNA TO ACCOMPANY ASAF ALI TO WASHINGTON BUT SHE STAYED FIRM.

ASAF ALI LEFT FOR WASHINGTON ON 7 FEBRUARY 1947.



ALL THE BEST, ASAF SAHEB.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, ARUNA.

ARUNA'S DECISION AROUSED PEOPLE'S CURIOSITY. AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN LAHORE -

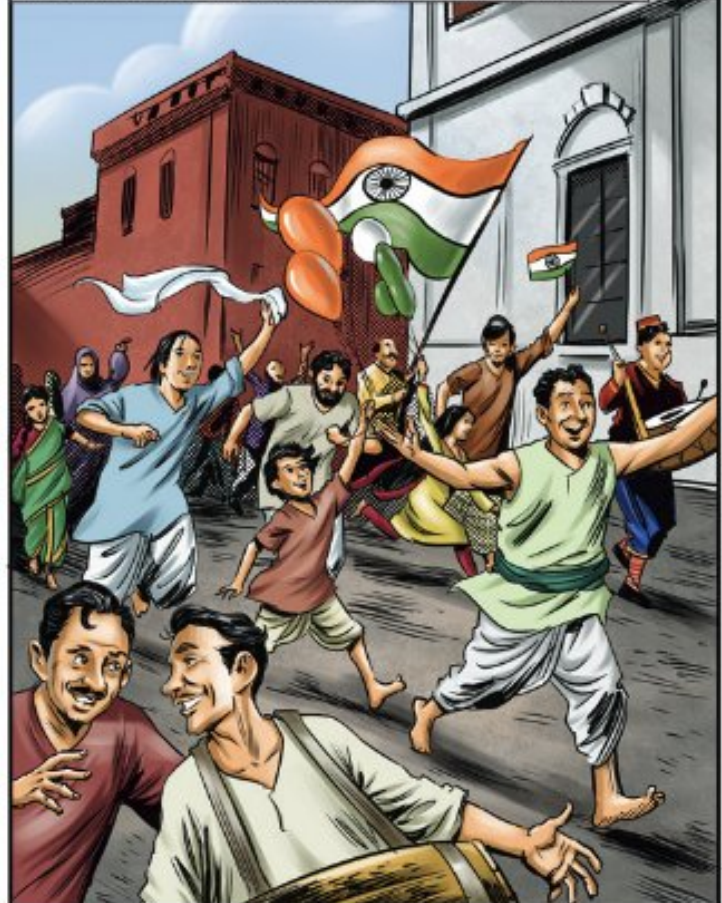


PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW WHY I HAVE NOT GONE TO WASHINGTON WITH MY HUSBAND. BUT IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A MOTHER TO LEAVE HER AILING CHILD?

WHAT NOBLE THOUGHTS!

SHE IS A TRUE PATRIOT.

ON 15 AUGUST 1947, THE MOMENT EVERY INDIAN HAD DREAMT OF AND WORKED FOR, FINALLY ARRIVED.



SOON AFTER, ARUNA JOINED HER HUSBAND IN LONDON FROM WHERE THEY WERE TO GO TO WASHINGTON D.C.



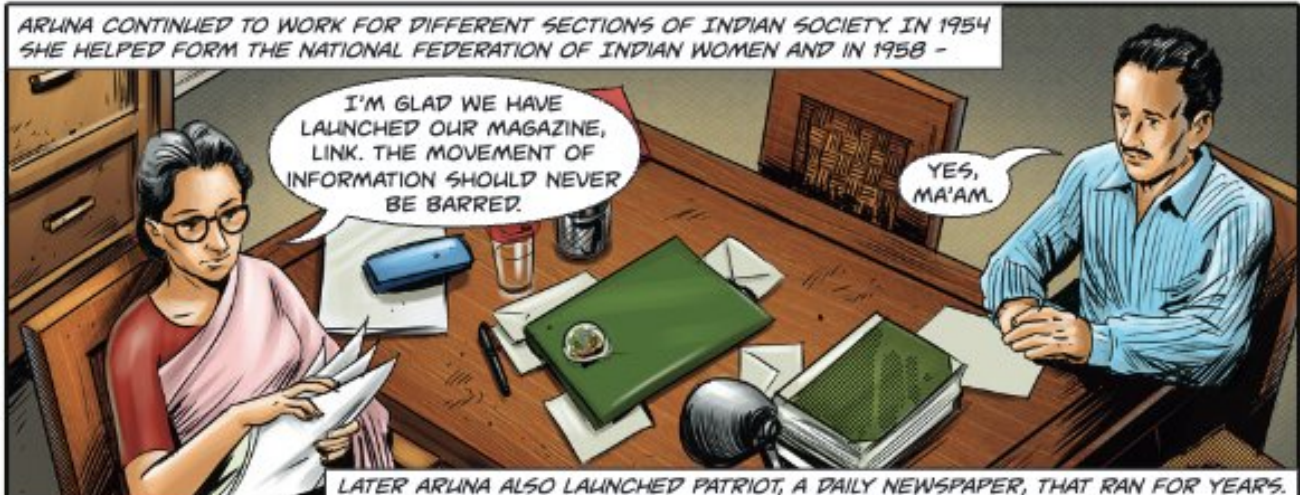
IN 1948 THE PEOPLE OF INDIA SUFFERED A GREAT LOSS.



IN 1953, ARUNA SUFFERED A MORE PERSONAL LOSS WHEN ASAF ALI, HER FRIEND, TEACHER, AND GUIDE PASSED AWAY*.

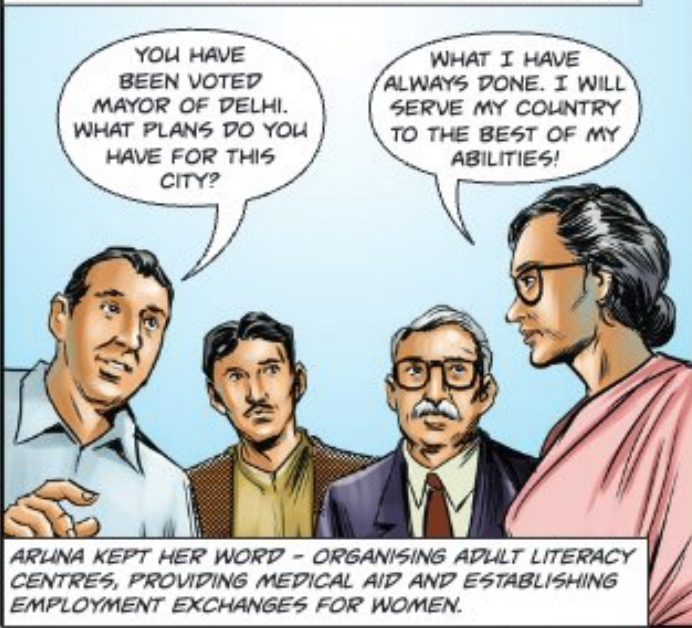


ARUNA CONTINUED TO WORK FOR DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF INDIAN SOCIETY. IN 1954 SHE HELPED FORM THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN WOMEN AND IN 1958 -



*ASAF ALI WAS AT THAT TIME INDIA'S AMBASSADOR TO SWITZERLAND AND ARUNA WAS VISITING HIM.

IN 1958, ARLUNA ASAF ALI EMBARKED ON A NEW ROLE.



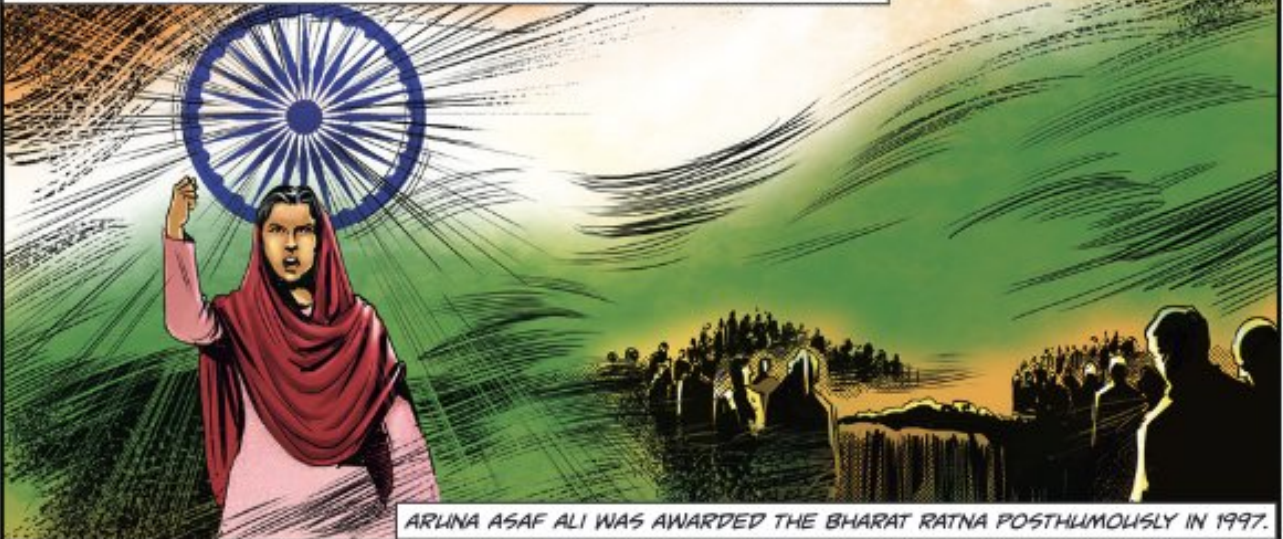
IN 1964 ARLUNA WAS AWARDED THE LENIN INTERNATIONAL PEACE PRIZE...



IN HER LATER YEARS, ARLUNA WAS OFTEN UNHAPPY WITH WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE COUNTRY. IN AN INTERVIEW IN 1991, WHEN SHE WAS 82 YEARS OLD -



ON 29 JULY 1996, ARLUNA ASAF ALI PASSED AWAY. WITH HER DEATH INDIA LOST A FEARLESS CAMPAIGNER FOR ITS RIGHTS AND A VIBRANT CHAPTER OF INDIAN HISTORY CAME TO A CLOSE.





ARUNA ASAF ALI

In the early hours of August 9, 1942, the British thought they had thwarted the plans of the freedom fighters – all the leaders had been arrested before they could assemble at Gowalia Tank Maidan. Little did they know that against all odds, a woman would come forth and hoist the flag, right before their eyes! She was Aruna Asaf Ali, who later became a symbol of the struggle as the 'Heroine of 1942'.

Amar Chitra Katha brings you the story of Aruna Asaf Ali, a young woman who risked her own life and joys for the freedom of her country. Even after independence, she continued to work for the people of her country and went on to serve as the first Mayor of Delhi. The story of her courage and determination truly makes her the 'Grand Old Lady of the Independence Movement'.

